

Invitation to Tender:

Short leadership programme for Libraries Connected

1. Introduction

Libraries Connected is an independent charity that supports, promotes and represents public libraries. Our work is driven and led by our membership, which includes almost every library service in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Crown Dependencies. Across the areas we serve, there are 176 individual library services with around 3,000 library branches serving over 61 million people. There are approximately 20,000 staff working in public libraries across the UK.

Libraries Connected operates under a strategic plan running until 2027, structured around four key themes: *Drive, Grow, Connect, and Engage*. A central focus of the *Grow* strand is the expansion of leadership and workforce development opportunities for the public library sector.

This invitation to tender is to commission a trainer to develop and deliver a 4-month leadership programme for twelve new and emerging Heads of Service. This programme has been funded by the Foyle Foundation.

Closing date for submissions: 15 September 2025, 9am.

2. Background

Libraries Connected are an independent charity that supports, promotes and represents public libraries. Our vision is an inclusive, modern, sustainable and high-quality public library service at the heart of every community in the UK. We believe modern public libraries should be the cornerstone of the community and should deliver a diverse spectrum of local needs around information, learning, literacy, employment and digital skills, health, culture and leisure.

Our unique approach is to bring the leaders of these services together to share experience, expertise and evidence – driving innovation and impact across the public library sector.

We develop and foster skills for change throughout the public libraries sector. We build leadership skills and provide senior managers with the tools to lead high quality library services rooted in evidence and best practice. We support the creation of an inspired and inclusive new generation of library workers, helping build a workforce that truly reflects the communities it serves. Our goal is for public library services to have the skills and diversity to be vital and enduring community institutions.

3. The brief

We are seeking a trainer to design and deliver a 4-month leadership programme to support 12 new and emerging public library Heads of Service in navigating change, building confidence, and leading collaboratively within a shifting local government landscape.

The programme should focus on modern leadership principles following New Local's [Radical Leadership model](#) and foster a cohort of leaders who are confident, collaborative, and community-focused.

The objectives of the programme:

- increase participants' confidence in their leadership capabilities in a changing local government landscape
- increase participants' effectiveness in terms of positioning and advocating for their service within local government
- deepen participants' understanding of collaborative leadership with communities
- enable participants to form a supportive cohort that sustains beyond the programme

4. Workplan and milestones

We anticipate the project will follow the outline below, though we welcome proposals that suggest alternative timelines or delivery models, provided they meet the core deliverables and programme objectives.

Phase 1: Programme Development

The programme development phase will begin upon appointment and is expected to run from October to November 2025.

- Design and preparation of content, materials, and delivery approach
- Engagement with the programme Steering Group to shape programme direction

Phase 2: Programme Delivery

The programme is expected to run from late November 2025 to the end of March 2026 and should include:

- 2 in-person full-day sessions
- 3-4 online sessions

We welcome your proposed approach to how these sessions are distributed across the four-month period. Please outline your preferred structure and rationale in your proposal. We would also like any materials produced for this programme to be able to be used by participants within their own library service.

5. Contract governance and programme evaluation

The contract will be directly managed by the Project Manager, Workforce Development and Skills at Libraries Connected. The Project Manager will work closely with the appointed provider and a Steering Group to shape the programme and support participant recruitment.

Programme evaluation will be undertaken by Libraries Connected. We will be particularly interested to see how participants' confidence in their leadership capabilities and advocacy skills has developed over the course of the programme, and how they have applied their learning in practice.

6. Budget

A maximum £10,000 budget is available for this project inclusive of VAT and all trainers' expenses.

Travel, accommodation, sustenance, and any other reasonable costs incurred by the tenderers as part of project should be costed in the overall budget.

Libraries Connected will manage the project and provide administrative support. Libraries Connected will organise the in-person events and fund the venue and catering costs.

7. About you

We welcome proposals from organisations and individuals with proven experience in leadership development. This may include work within the library sector or in other fields where leadership is shaped through collaboration with communities – such as local government, health and social care, education, housing, or the voluntary and community sector.

We are particularly interested in partners who:

- Create safe, inclusive, and inspiring learning environments
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to accessibility and inclusion in both design and delivery
- Share our values and our ambition for a diverse, community-focused workforce

8. Process for submitting proposals

8.1 Procurement timetable

Procurement activity	Date
Deadline for submitting tenders	15 September 2025, 9am
Tender reviews	19 September 2025
Possible interviews and presentations	22 September – 3 October 2025
Final decision	8 October 2025

8.2 Proposal content

Please submit proposals by email to Becky Scott becky.scott@librariesconnected.org.uk by 9am on 15 September 2025.

Proposals should be a maximum of 2500 words and should include:

- An understanding of the brief
- An outline methodology for achieving the brief
- Your approach to leadership development
- A statement of your relevant skills and experience in context of this brief
- An outline work plan and timetable for the project, including your proposed use of the in-person sessions.
- A clear breakdown of costs which includes all rates, fees and expenses you are anticipating for the project. If you are VAT registered, this must be included in your costings
- Two contactable referees who could provide a relevant reference of your suitability to work on this project
- A statement showing your understanding of, and commitment to, the [values of Libraries Connected](#)

8.3 Proposal submissions

Please email proposals to: becky.scott@librariesconnected.org.uk by 15th September 2025, 9am.

8.4 Evaluation of proposals

We will evaluate proposals using the following criteria:

Criteria	Weighting
Extent to which proposal demonstrates an understanding of the brief	20
Quality of the proposed approach to leadership development, including how it will be accessible, inclusive, and engaging	25
Knowledge and experience relevant to the project	20
Alignment to the values of Libraries Connected	15
Cost and value for money	20

9. Terms of business

Libraries Connected usually pay an instalment at the project initiation, and then staged payments at project milestones and a final payment when the work is fully signed off. However, this is negotiable depending on the size and length of the project.

10. Compliance

Libraries Connected reserves the right to disqualify any provider's response to this ITT if it does not fully comply with the requirements contained therein. This is particularly relevant in relation to the stated closing date and time of applications.

Libraries Connected is not responsible for and will not pay for any expenses or losses you incur during, but not limited to, the application preparation, visits, negotiations, or interviews in relation to this procurement process. It is your responsibility to ensure that any consortium member, sub-contractor, and adviser abide by the conditions set out by Libraries Connected.

In submitting a response to this ITT, it will be implied that you accept all the provisions of this ITT including these conditions.

If Libraries Connected needs to change any information contained within this ITT before the closing date, you will be written to advise you of these changes, which includes the extension of any submission deadlines. Libraries Connected reserves the right to cancel or suspend this ITT process at any time but will notify you in writing as soon as possible if this occurs.

It is expected that the contractor will work within the values and behaviours of Libraries Connected and this will be part of the contract of engagement.

11. Further information

Please contact Becky Scott, Project Manager: Workforce Development:
becky.scott@librariesconnected.org.uk if you require further details or would like to clarify any requirements.